**Chapter Three**

**Folk Heritage and its Forms**

**Folk Heritage**

**The Definition**

In order to focus on the importance of folk heritage on Palestinian children’s literature, we must first define “folk heritage” in general and “Palestinian folk heritage” specifically before reviewing the most important types of folk heritage under examination. The term “folk heritage”[[1]](#footnote-1) commonly refers to the material and moral heritage, both private and scholarly, inherited through a community’s ancestors.[[2]](#footnote-2) The scholar Ibrahim Mahawwi includes within folk heritage all the activities that typically represent daily nonverbal arts, such as folk music and dance as well as verbal arts, like folk songs, poetry, stories, legends of saints, riddles, jokes, and handmade folk crafts.[[3]](#footnote-3) Heritage is considered a vital means for linking past and present nationalism. In his book *Interpreting Folklore*, the anthropologist Alan Dundes maintains that heritage represents a fundamental element of the cultural identity of all peoples and plays a prominent role in consolidating the different conceptions linking people’s lives, history, and the meaning of their existence. Dundes adds that heritage serves to identify a group of people (regardless of their racial, ethnic, or religious background) that shares commonly recognized traditions.[[4]](#footnote-4)

The critic Roland Barthes view heritage as a scholarly and spiritual remnant from the past from which to draw inspiration for interpretation to reflect modern meanings. Literary modernity cannot continue without turning to heritage.[[5]](#footnote-5) According to anthropologist Shelagh Weir, heritage represents the backbone of national identity or patriotism, and without it, people lose the essentials of their being, as well as the rationale for their existence as a people. Thus, heritage becomes a symbol of national identity within every population and culture.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Despite the multiplicity of the concepts of heritage and the curricula for its study, there is a consensus among scholars and researchers that heritage must be linked to the present while also applying a modern vision to it that give rise to suggestive dimensions expressing the present.[[7]](#footnote-7)

**Interest in Folk Heritage: Its Origin and Directions**

Researchers[[8]](#footnote-8) agree that the scientific study of folklore emerged at the beginning of the 19th century as a result of the romantic and nationalistic movement in Europe.[[9]](#footnote-9) This movement came to be known as the Romantic Nationalistic School and its approach was focused on folk heritage. Thus, writers gravitated towards compiling folk stories, songs, and customs that reflect the past, subsequently enabling the reconstruction of ancient life by comparing folk stories and customs.[[10]](#footnote-10)

The “Brothers Grimm,” Jacob and William, who are credited as the first folklorists, emerged during Germany’s romantic period (1785–1859) and played a pioneering role in compiling folklore. They aimed to set national classics for the German people and preserve German identity during Napoleon’s conquests. With the aim of distinguishing German identity from that of the neighboring populations, they published a collection of German folk stories under the titles *Kinder und Hausmarchen* (1812) and *Deutsche Mythologie* (1812–1815).[[11]](#footnote-11)

With this, the study of folklore became exclusively linked to the peasant class. Indeed, Dundes confirms that the work of the Brothers Grimm marked the beginning of the study of folklore.[[12]](#footnote-12) At that time, folklore was considered a branch of sociology influenced by modern anthropology and, according to the British researcher Edward B. Taylor, by evolution as well. According to this theory, human evolution underwent several stages found in the folk life of communities whose traditional beliefs survived the advanced stages of human evolution and perhaps through which those older stages can be reconstructed.[[13]](#footnote-13)

 Furthermore, it is worth noting that at the turn of the 20th century, interest in folklore grew among the leading anthropologists responsible for establishing a branch of anthropology which focused on the study of folklore. From their focus on folk beliefs and legends,[[14]](#footnote-14) a new definition of the term “folklore” emerged: “oral transmission,” through which customs and traditions were passed on from one generation to the next without the need for orthographic documentation.[[15]](#footnote-15) Drawing on this new definition, researcher Grace Khoury maintains that folklore consists not solely of remnants from earlier ages, but is actually a live performance of individuals, evolving along with society’s development. Thus, folklore represents that persistence of humanity, thereby rendering folklore accessible to all.[[16]](#footnote-16)

The study of folklore took a new directioin in the 1960s, when researchers began studying heritage through texts in line with the work of the Russian folkloric researcher, Vladimir Propp,[[17]](#footnote-17) who proposed a general theory for the study of cultures in his book *The Morphology of the Folktale* (1977).[[18]](#footnote-18) This theory had a particularly strong impact on The Narrative School, which focused on the study of linguistics through the analysis of folk texts.[[19]](#footnote-19) This subsequently led to the development of formalist theories and curricula as independent studies in and of themselves. Folklore scholarship was strongly affected by this change, as it merged into a postmodernist context and shifted its focus to studying the issue of social identity among minorities.[[20]](#footnote-20)

Investigating the historical details of these European schools and the theories of the study of various schools folklore is beyond the scope of the present. Instead, the primary focus of this study is the influence of their adherents on the evolution of the study of folklore, especially the study of Arabic folklore.

**Arab Interest in Folk Heritage**

Modern scholars’ interest in the question of heritage began in the Arab countries after examining modern European cultures and opening up to western civilization. This interest crystallized during WWII and its aftermath in the 1950’s, when the Arab world began to achieve its political independence as the era of colonialism was coming to a close. Al-Barghouthi explains that the delay of Arab interest in heritage stemmed from their fear of colloquial Arabic’s tyranny on standard Arabic and, consequently, the Holy Quran.[[21]](#footnote-21)

Serious interest in folk heritage thus received a new impetus, especially after a series of defeats suffered by the Arabs, which were followed by the political and intellectual transformations that led to an emergence of republican regimes and the collapse of monarchial rule. These transformations encouraged the interest in heritage, which began to serve as an important source of inspiration due to its link to real life as an important patriotic legacy.[[22]](#footnote-22) This is evident in the increase of specialized scientific studies which started to emerge in some Arab countries, as can be seen in Ahmed Timor’s (1871–1930) posthumously published book, *Colloquial Proverbs and Writings and Imagination of the Shadow, Playing, and Photographed Statues* (1953). Ahmed Amin’s (1886–1954) book *The Dictionary of Egyptian Customs and Expressions* (1953), also evidenced an interest in heritage. After the Culture Directorate took over the Ministry of Education in 1945, patriotic motivations prompted the establishment of what came to be known as “The Folk University” which aimed to spread culture to the masses via lectures and symposiums. It also spurred a movement to translate important literature in the field of heritage into many languages;[[23]](#footnote-23) conferences were held that called for collecting and preserving heritage, as well as exploring how to form scholarly bodies at the national level (such as institutes for Arabic folkloric studies and national archives) and convene international and Arab meetings on folk heritage.[[24]](#footnote-24)

It should be noted that the 1960s are considered the period in which Arab countries became officially interested in heritage because of the increased challenges these countries faced, whether economic, social, or cultural in nature. This led to increased material and moral support for local efforts to preserve cultural, indeed, civilization identity of Arab society, as reflected in the emergence of local official foundations to preserve local heritage, as well as the founding of different museums in various Arab countries.[[25]](#footnote-25) This newfound emphasis on heritage arose from the region’s fear of losing part of its history, as studying the traditional practices prevailing in the region shed light on the social, intellectual, and political history.[[26]](#footnote-26)

In the early 2000’s, calls for the preservation, verification, and recording of heritage increased—perhaps globalization was the driving force for this increased interest, in addition to the pursuit of collecting and defining it as a means of preserving cultural identity.[[27]](#footnote-27) Furthermore, interest in heritage became more nationalistic after having been an Arab national interest.

**Palestinian Folk Heritage and Its Importance**

Folk heritage is one of the most important sources of identity for Palestinians, especially in light of the political situation that often threatens their very existence. This deep connection throughout history enables them not only to endure the difficult circumstances they may presently face, but also gives them faith in the future. Thus, heritage is important to Palestinians, supporting their unity as a people despite differences in gender, age, religion, and location.[[28]](#footnote-28)

In the 20th century, the Palestinian community endeavored to reconstruct its national identity and collective memory. In the past, Palestinians saw the past as an important tool in creating a national identity and attaining their vision of the future in which the young generation played a large role. In this respect, Al-Barghouthi observes that society’s education of its young about its cultural heritage is vital for the society itself, which is searching for its identity in the present and planning for its future.[[29]](#footnote-29) If we examine the historical development of interest in Palestinian heritage, we can see that scholars[[30]](#footnote-30) divided it into six stages. However, since this study confirms that beginnings of interest in heritage in children’s literature increased noticeably after 1987, we prefer to divide it into four separate stages, as explained in the sections below.

**Palestinian Folk Heritage in the Orientalism Stage (Until 1948)**

Foreign researchers[[31]](#footnote-31) became interested in the Arab countries in the aftermath of colonialism,[[32]](#footnote-32) and it is in this context that the Orientalist Movement[[33]](#footnote-33) began in Palestine. While they were in the region, European orientalists collected a considerable amount of folk heritage. However, among the many books and articles these European scholars published, Palestinian folk heritage was mentioned only fleetingly, as their work focused far more on the Torah and the Gospels.[[34]](#footnote-34) Later, as the elements of the study of folklore started to become defined and crystallized, some orientalists began showing an interest in Palestinian heritage. Finnish researcher Hilma Granqvist was at the forefront of folklorists who conducted in-depth and comprehensive studies of Palestinian society between 1925–1947. Her research yielded three publications, *Birth and Childhood Among Arabs*, *Children’s Dilemmas in Arab Society*, and *Marriage Traditions in a Palestinian Village*.[[35]](#footnote-35)

Between 1928–1942, German scholar Gustav Dalman published seven volumes entitled *Arabit Und Sitte in Palastina*, in which he describes all aspects of Palestinian daily life. He also published another book containing research and descriptions of folk songs in Palestine, Jordan, and Syria entitled *Palastinische Diwan.* During this period, European orientalists continued their studies on Palestinian folk heritage and life. According to Kan’aana, only a small number of Palestinian researchers[[36]](#footnote-36) joined these orientalists, publishing their research in *Journal of Palestinian Oriental Society.*[[37]](#footnote-37)Kan’aana further assertsthat the reason for the Palestinian researchers’ lack of interest in this topic during that period stemmed from their fear for Classical Arabic.[[38]](#footnote-38)

For the present discussion, we are primarily concerned with the Palestinian researcher Tawfiq Kan’aan (1882–1964) and his role in compiling and studying Palestinian folklore. Kan’aana considered, perhaps Kan’aan’s greatest contribution was his collecting of heritage and how he employed it, as his motivations were both the advancement of scholarly documentation and nationalistic. This enabled him to accomplish a quantum leap in increasing the interest in Palestinian heritage. Thus, according to researchers, Kan’aan’s works and writings make him “the undisputed spiritual father and founder of the Palestinian folkloric movement.”[[39]](#footnote-39) He published his studies in English in *Medical Journal Palestine*, where he focused on myths, folk medicine, seasons, holidays, shrines of saints, folk proverbs, and the traditional Palestinian home.

**After the Nakba (1948–1967)**

After the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and its first two decades of state-building, many Palestinians sought refuge in neighboring countries, taking their heritage with them. This heritage, as Al-Mahawwi states in his book *Who Forgot His Stock is Lost*, was a source of strength and resilience during this time.[[40]](#footnote-40) Thus, awareness about Palestinian identity increased, especially among the Palestinian diaspora, as they resorted to deepening their attachment to their homeland and heritage, as well as recreating their homeland in the refugee camps. Palestinian folkloric research became a means of defending Palestinian identity, especially in the wake of the formation of the Palestinian Liberation Organization in 1964.[[41]](#footnote-41) However, the Palestinians who remained in Israel were cut off from the rest of Palestinian society after the mass exodus, leaving them a minority, despite having been the overwhelming majority prior to the establishment of Israel. Furthermore, they were subject to military rule, which forbade them from leaving their cities and villages without permission from the military.

**After the Setback (1967–1986)**

Kan’aana asserts that the War of 1967 marked the start of a new stage in the history of the development of the Palestinian folkloric movement, adding that it coincided with the expansion of the national liberation movement as well as the establishment of several Palestinian nationalist foundations, many of which focused on the conservation of Palestinian heritage.[[42]](#footnote-42) The Family Revival Association in Al-Bireh was the most important of these foundations, with reviving, preserving, and protecting Palestinian folk heritage at the forefront of its mission. It branched into The Committee of Social Research and Palestinian Folk Heritage,[[43]](#footnote-43) which was founded in 1972 and published *The Journal of Heritage and Society.* This journal, which still releases new editions,[[44]](#footnote-44) is considered one of a kind, as it focuses on studying and analyzing Palestinian heritage.[[45]](#footnote-45)

Interest in heritage increased after 1967, at the behest of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, which by then had become the effective representative of the Palestinian people. At the same time, Palestinians were convinced they could achieve national liberation only by taking matters into their own hands and making their own destiny rather than relying on Arab states.[[46]](#footnote-46) In the late 1960’s, some studies on Palestinian heritage were published.[[47]](#footnote-47) Palestinians in Israel viewed their situation as a Palestinian minority in their own homeland as a threat to their existence, spurring their ambition to preserve their identity and heritage. Viewing this route as an alternative to political activism, they chose to express themselves through heritage, Dabke troops, dancing, folk music, folkloric festivals, seminars, and conferences.[[48]](#footnote-48)

In 1984, Salih Bransy (1928–1999) founded the Center for the Revitalization of Arab Heritage in the Palestinian Triangle area of Israel. This center initiated the convening of heritage conferences and festivals, the most important of which was The Jerusalem International Conference for Palestinian Folk Heritage in 1987. It also founded the heritage museum in the town of Sakhnin and published several studies about heritage. Tawfiq Ziyyad (1929–1994) was also interested in compiling heritage, expressing his motivations in his book *Pictures from Palestinian Folk Literature* (1974) and especially in “Let’s Save Our Folk Literature from Getting Lost.” He considered heritage a creation of the people themselves that is always open to modification from future generations. As a result, it is also in danger of being lost; hence the importance of compiling and recording the Palestinian folk heritage in writing.

In Ziyyad’s view, the younger generation must learn their heritage in order for them to absorb and build on their national and humanitarian traditions.[[49]](#footnote-49) Ziyyad wrote a series of articles about Palestinian heritage between 1967–1970, which were published in the Haifa-based journal *The New*. He also published studies entitled *On Literature and Folk Literature in Palestine* (1970) and *Nasrawi’s Daily Life in the Red Square* (1973), as well as a collection of stories from Palestinian heritage entitled *The Status of the World* (1975).

Tawfiq’s employment of heritage in his poems represents a semantic phenomenon with significant qualitative and quantitative significance, as can be seen in the use of heritage in stories, folk songs, customs and traditions, and folk proverbs.[[50]](#footnote-50) Palestinian writers in Israel (e.g., Emile Habibi (1921–1996), Jamal Kawar, Tawfiq Fayyad, Samih Al-Qasim (1939–2015) were inspired by heritage, using it to express national issues.[[51]](#footnote-51) Kan’aana asserts that the Palestinian folkloric movement belongs to the Palestinian national liberation movement, and that the success of the folkloric movement in the aftermath of the 1967 war reflects the success of the national liberation movement’s efforts to create a national identity.[[52]](#footnote-52)

**Post- *Intifada* to the Present**

The first *Intifada* erupted at the end of 1987, increasing patriotic and nationalistic sentiment, especially among Palestinian writers. Thus, interest in Palestinian heritage also increased, as well as the call to collect and preserve it,[[53]](#footnote-53) as Palestinians perceived the *Intifada* as a new, clearly-defined phase in their struggle against the occupation, seeing it as new way of living and thinking.[[54]](#footnote-54) The *Intifada* was the peak of the Palestinian national movement and Kan’aana maintains that evidence of the formation of the unity of the Palestinian people began in practice after 1967, although this unity first emerged only after the first *Intifada*.

As Kan’aana observes: “Today, Palestinians are confronted with the danger of the decay and loss of Palestinian identity. The danger is not that of physical genocide or the loss of land, but rather that of dissolution resulting from the loss of identity.”[[55]](#footnote-55) Subsequently, Palestinian writers became seriously interested in the importance of preserving the Palestinian heritage of that period. In this spirit, the researchers Ibrahim Mahawwi and Sharif Kan’aana compiled Palestinian folk stories and published them in English in a book entitled *Speak Bird, Speak Again* (1989),which was translated to Arabic in 2001.

*Speak Bird, Speak Again* is an important reference for Palestinian folk tales. In the book’s introduction, the researchers state that by collecting these stories, they aim to preserve the collective memory of the Palestinian people and strengthen their cultural identity, especially among the younger generations who live either under occupation or in the diaspora, as both groups are alienated from their society’s traditions.[[56]](#footnote-56)

British researcher Shelagh Weir published her book *Palestinian Folk Costume* in 1989 through the British Museum. In 1992, the Center for the Revival of Arab Heritage in Taibe, in Israel, adopted an initiative to preserve a collective Palestinian identity. In 1994, the center held a conference in Jerusalem, The First International Conference on Palestinian Folklore, with the aim of conveying “the voice of the Palestinian folkloric movement and consequently the voice of the Palestinian people to the rest of the world.”[[57]](#footnote-57) Interest in Palestinian heritage continued with the declaration of the Oslo Accords in 1993 and the establishment of the Palestinian government and its national institutions that also took responsibility for preserving and maintaining interest in Palestinian heritage. Indeed, the Palestinian folkloric movement can be said to be part of the Palestinian national liberation movement, in that they both faced the same problems and difficulties.

**Forms of Folk Heritage**

**Presentation**

Here we will shed light on the most important types of folk heritage, summarizing the most popular forms found in literature in general and more specifically in Palestinian children’s literature. After reading many compilations of children’s texts, we found that the authors had drawn on the most important forms of folk heritage; namely folktales, proverbs, and folk songs. While they did turn to other forms of Palestinian literature as well, they did so only occasionally, and thus does not contribute to the aims of the study. Thus, here we will simply summarize e the findings that are applicable to this book, as there are many studies that provide detailed explanations of the various genres of folk heritage.[[58]](#footnote-58) This chapter’s unique contribution is in its focus on defining Palestinian folk heritage.

**Folk Tales**

**The Concept of Folktales**

Before explaining the concept of folktales, we should first clarify that this study distinguishes between fairy tales and folktales.[[59]](#footnote-59) In order to prevent confusion, we will explore only the features of folktales. Folktales are considered among the oldest known forms and are a form of social expression through which a people’s reality and dreams are expressed.[[60]](#footnote-60) According to Nabila Ibrahim, folktales are pieces of information that connect past events and transmit them orally from one generation to the next, thereby creating the collective imagination connecting important events, people, and historical sites.[[61]](#footnote-61) As folktales have a flexible structure, they are open to omissions, additions, or substitutions, thus enabling stories to change according to social and cultural factors.

It is this flexibility that enables the folktale’s function to remain constant. According to Hassoona, “stories may differ in subject matter from place to place, and the details and purposes of the tale may change when it moves from one country to another.”[[62]](#footnote-62) Folktales are considered a means of human expression and are a literary device through which people can convey their thoughts, beliefs, and philosophies. Furthermore, the entertainment and suspenseful qualities of these tales, combined with their linguistic simplicity, aid in their preservation. Folktales represent cultural and spiritual aspects of life, offering significant glimpses into the past.[[63]](#footnote-63)

**Features of Folktales**

The artistic structure of folktales has semi-fixed components. These components, known as “Olrik’s Narrative Laws,” were set forth by Danish researcher Axel Olrik in 1909 after he carried out his research on European and Scandinavian folktales in particular.[[64]](#footnote-64) The researcher Aleeza Shinhar asserts that these rules are also applicable to children’s literature.[[65]](#footnote-65) The following are the central principles most applicable to our examination:

1. “The Law of Opening and Closing”: In the beginning of every folktale, the narrator attempts to grab the listener’s attention. The introductory phrase “once upon a time” is a customary opening in folktales and most folktales have a happy ending;
2. “The Law of Repetition”: A specific scenario is repeated and emphasized in folktales so that the recipient can relate to the main character;
3. “The Law of Contrast’: Folktales favor good characters over evil ones;
4. “The Law of Two to a Scene”: There are typically three main protagonists in a folktale: good, bad, and neutral. At the climax of the tale, the neutral character joins forces with the good character to defeat the bad character.

**Palestinian Folktales**

Palestinian folktales have several influences, the most important of which are historical factors, as these tales have preserved thoughts and facts from ancient eras. Geographical factors also have a strong influence on the structure of folktales, as they all contain elements of the Palestinian natural environment. Religion and the political and economic situations in Palestine have also influenced the content of the tales. Thus, it can be said that whatever shocks and afflictions the Palestinian people experienced left their mark on Palestinian folktales.[[66]](#footnote-66)

Along the course of history, Palestinian folktales have depicted various social stages, and they came to serve as a representation of social changes involving the Palestinian people’s right to freedom, ownership, and expression of free will. Hassoona emphasizes that folktales are one of the fundamental elements highlighting the historical and vital link to the Palestinian people.[[67]](#footnote-67) He adds that the obvious employment of Palestinian Arabic is one of the most important characteristics of Palestinian folktales.

**The Folk Proverb**

**The Concept of the Folk Proverb**

In her book, *The Proverb*, Wendy Peffer stresses the difficulty of defining the term “folk proverb” writing: “It is an integral part of our daily spoken language, and we have grown up hearing it and using it to express our needs, thus making it difficult to construe.”[[68]](#footnote-68) Nabila Ibrahim defines folk proverbs as the adages that encapsulate a philosophical concept.[[69]](#footnote-69) In Finnegan’s view, however, proverbs are abbreviated terms with a metaphorical quality.[[70]](#footnote-70) In his book *Palestinian Personality Traits as Expressed in Folk Proverbs,* Salim Al-Mubayyid contends that the folk proverb is the byproduct of a conscious experience balanced by reflection and intellect.[[71]](#footnote-71) Khoury, on the other hand, prefers the definition of folklore provided by Maghnia in the preface to his book *The Dictionary of Libyan Proverbs*: “a genre of colloquial literature distinguished by its eloquent brevity, simplistic style, and succinct meaning.”[[72]](#footnote-72) Hassoona defines folk proverbs as wise, eloquent sayings with deep meanings, spoken easily and simply by the population. They represent the epitome of a deep experience formed over a long time and passed on from generation to generation, reflecting and expressing meaningful and difficult historical experiences.[[73]](#footnote-73)

**Characteristics of Folk Proverbs**

Folk proverbs are the most widespread form of folktale, and thus they play an important role in highlighting the social and economic values in society. Through their circulation, the general public strives to deepen its moral standards, customs, traditions, and views. In this way, folk proverbs serve as forms of modern heritage.[[74]](#footnote-74) Chaim Weiss[[75]](#footnote-75) defined the main features of folk proverbs as: currency, repetition, the use of old-fashioned words, rhyming, and metaphors. Khoury added other features to this list, namely didacticism, imparts wisdom, is easy to memorize, and expresses a known truth.[[76]](#footnote-76)

**Palestinian Folk Proverbs**

Palestinian folk proverbs resulted from historical, geographic, literary, material, and economic factors combined with the customs and traditions of both the masses and the intellectual elite. Consequently, folk proverbs express people’s lives and feelings, as they emerge from the reality of their environment. In Abu Hanna’s view, Palestinian folk proverbs arise from a specific event or story.[[77]](#footnote-77) Ibrahim Abbas sees Palestinian folk proverbs as a result of residual echoes in the popular conscience of a record of life experiences, reflecting people’s customs, beliefs, concerns, occasions, and actions level of individuals and at the level of the group.at the individual and collective levels.[[78]](#footnote-78) The researcher Fatima Shaqir presents several characteristics distinguishing Palestinian folk problems, including:[[79]](#footnote-79)

1. The need for continuity in life in light of change being an essential part of life, as expressed in the folk proverb, “nothing is eternal.”[[80]](#footnote-80)
2. The paradoxical combination of words in the same proverb; “neither tall nor short nor swaddled in bed.”[[81]](#footnote-81)
3. The reflection of the Palestinian people’s daily life, beliefs, and social lives: “do not talk while eating.”[[82]](#footnote-82)
4. The folk proverbs are distinguished by their eloquence and match the words to the appropriate situation: “it is like being dressed in seven souls.”[[83]](#footnote-83)

**Folk Songs**

**The Concept of Folk Songs**

Fouzy Anteel defined “folk song” (*volkslied)*[[84]](#footnote-84) as a poem of unknown origin with music and lyrics. Folk songs originated among the masses in the past and remain in circulation for a long time.[[85]](#footnote-85) They are characterized by a myriad of social phenomena and can often more effectively express folk customs, traditions, and rituals than can more eloquent poetry. This is due to folk songs’ closeness to society on the one hand, and their association with social norms and traditions on the other hand.[[86]](#footnote-86) In contrast, Hassoona defines folk songs as an offshoot of folk literature, as folk songs are clearly connected to the environment in which they are circulated and to the circumstances in which they are sung before they gain widespread acceptance. Khoury adds that the most important distinguishing traits of folk songs are their direct connection to the melody, vocal performance, and the activation of movement.[[87]](#footnote-87)

**Folk Song Characteristics**

Ali Al-Khaleeli presents the most important folk song characteristics,[[88]](#footnote-88) namely the brevity of sentences and the use of old folk melodies, with their distinct communicative style. Within each melody are words relayed in colloquial Arabic. He adds that folk songs rely on their words for impact, with each song having a specific musical style based on the various meters of its poetry.[[89]](#footnote-89) Furthermore, he maintains that folk songs are characterized by their linguistic simplicity and delicate elocution, as they have no known composer or author, nor known date of composition.

**Palestinian Folk Songs**

Hassoona defines Palestinian folk songs as an art form within the realm of popular literature that originated in the colloquial Palestinian dialect and were created by one or more conveyers of heritage from the past. These songs resonated about the Palestinians, as they expressed what Palestinians truly cared about. As a result, they spread and were passed down from generation to generation. Ultimately, they were became anonymous, belonging to the people and expressing their collective emotions.[[90]](#footnote-90) They are characterized by concise phrases, catchy melodies and strong rhythms.[[91]](#footnote-91)

Khouri notes that Palestinian folk songs have gone through several stages, including the classical, romantic, realistic and socialist realism periods.[[92]](#footnote-92) Between the period spanning 1948–1967 during which the Palestinian people witnessed the *nakba* and the “setback of June,” Palestinian folk songs conveyed the national struggle, focusing on themes of migration, exile and yearning for the homeland.[[93]](#footnote-93) The researcher Nimer Serhan presents several distinguishing features of Palestinian folk songs, including their prevalence and popularity in Palestinian society, their oral transmission, and their anonymity.[[94]](#footnote-94)

1. “Folk heritage” is the Arabic term recommended as a substitute for the famous foreign term, “folklore,” which was first used in 1846 when British researcher Willian John Thomas recommended its usage as a name for the field that teaches customs, traditions, practices, legends, epics, and proverbs (Serhan, p. 20; see also: Thomas 1968: 21–34); Khoury 2013: 19). In order to avoid confusion, this study will use the term “folklore” to denote the scientific study of the field of folk heritage and the Arabic term “folk heritage” to refer to the same cultural materials in the applied study. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. According to Al-Munasira, heritage is one level of the national and patriotic culture of a people. This level is related to the formation of emotions and spirituality. It transcends the shifts of folk history, as evidenced in its dialectical literature written by a known or anonymous individual and becoming an essential part of the collective consciousness. Heritage, which people receive from their parents (2007: 29–33), moves chronologically across the past, present, and future, thereby imbuing it with an immense emotional impact (Al-Munasira 2009: 7–9); Al-Mutawwir defines folklore as comprising the entire formation of ideas, beliefs, morals, laws, and language and encompassing all the tools, instruments, weapons, and other inventions that people find suitable for use in their lives. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Mahawwi (2000: 16–17). For the significance of the term folk heritage see: Kan’aana (1981: 25). Al-Jawhari also dedicated an entire chapter to defining the concept of this term in his book *Studies in the Science of Folklore*, detailing its elements. (Al-Jawhari 1998: 37–58). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Dundes 1980: 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Barthes 1994: 65. See also: Al-Jabiri who ascertains the importance of heritage as a unifying element for identity in Arabic communities and describes it as a component of the Arab psyche and a fundamental element for its unity. According to Al-Jabiri, heritage forms one of the pillars of cultural identity (1999: 23). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Weir 1989: 273. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Mabrook 1986: 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. For more on the study of folklore see: Lowie 1929: 12–34. Interest in folklore began in the 19th century with the beginning of the industrial revolution and the renaissance movement of that period. The 19th century represents an important stage in the development and expansion of the field of humanities (Krappe 1964: 112–345). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. For elaboration on the romantic movement see: Hilal 1986: 12–123. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Al-Jawhari 1975: 48-58; Al-Anteel 1978: 11–27. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Friedrich 1973: 44–156. For the patriotic motivations of “the Brothers Grimm” see: Alqam 1993: 5; Khoury 2013: 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Dundes 1980: 2–9. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. According to Taylor’s theory, human evolution underwent three stages: savagery, barbarism, and civilization, respectively (Dundes 1980: 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. James George Frazer (1854–1941) is considered one of the pioneers who laid the ground work for the study of folklore, mostly notably *The Golden Bough*(1890) and *Folklore in Old Testament* (Al-Anteel 1978: 161–226; Alqam 1993: 10–11). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Khoury 2013: 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Khoury 2013: 20–21. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Propp 1977: 12–24. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Propp 1977: 12–24. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Hazan-Rotem 1997: 5–13. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. On the late emergence of interest in heritage among Arabic, see: Al-Mutawwir 2007: 25. In this regard, Khoury says that the Arab nations were under foreign rule for centuries, first Ottoman, and then European colonialism. He adds that, in the wake of their independence, these nations began to recognize the importance of folklore in confirming national identity and some Arab governments took an interest in traditional and folk intellectual and artistic cultural heritage (Khoury 2013: 60). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Al-Barghouthi 1988: 10–24. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Khoury 2013: 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Ahmed Rushdi Saleh translated the book *Folklore* (1967) by Alexander Krappe. Similarly, Nabila Abraham translated James George Frazer’s *Folklore in Old Testament* (1973) and the German fairy tale by folklorist Friedrich von der Leyen Friedrichvonder (Alqam 1993: 29). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Alqam 1993: 32–33. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. The Center of Folk Arts was founded in Egypt in 1957. The center’s main aim was the compilation of nationalistic heritage from across Egypt and organizing it in a scientific archive. The Committee for Folk Arts was founded in Libya and Tunisia. In Iraq, a special department for the arts and folk culture was founded within the Ministry of Information, and in 1971, a government legislation was passed to found the Center of Folklore which aimed to study Iraqi folk heritage specifically. The Center for Folk Arts was founded in Kuwait in 1965 to compile and organize Kuwaiti heritage. Furthermore, the Culture Directorate which focused on Jordanian heritage was founded in Jordan. The directorate explores folklore, and its most important objectives are to collect aspects of material, social, intellectual and artistic life (Alqam 1993: 31). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. A folklore museum was founded in Libya and boasted many departments, including folk medicine, music, tools, and folk attire. There are also several museums in Morocco which display folk materials. Syria has a museum of Syrian customs and traditions, and Iraq has a museum dedicated to Baghdadi folk traditions and another to folk costumes. In Kuwait, there is a museum displaying models of material life such as costumes, shipbuilding materials and fishing methods (Aqlam 1993: 32). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Ismail 2009: 253–266. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Mahawwi 2000: 16–17. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Al-Barghouthi 1988: 40–43. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Kan’aana 2000: 35–53. Compare: Al-Mutawwir 2007: 20–25. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Or, as Kan’aana calls it “the beginning of the Arab nationalist ideology stage” (2011: 144). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. It is necessary to point out the importance of the Palestinian land and its holiness. Palestine attracted the attention of many foreigners. Visitors wrote diaries and books about what they saw, and researchers in various fields of arts and sciences, especially archaeologists, historians, geographers, and folkloric scholars wrote many books and published many studies about the various aspects of folk life (Biseeso 1983: 22). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. “Orientalism” is the name given to the different academic branches dedicated to studying the languages and cultures of the East. “Orientalist”, on the other hand, is a westerner who studies the heritage of the East, such as India, Iran, China, Japan, the Arab world, and other Eastern nations (Said 1981: 2; Haddad 1991: 86). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Al-Mutawwir 2007: 21; Kan’aana 2011: 145. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. For elaboration see: Kan’aana 2000: 159–172; Al-Mutawwir 2007: 21–22. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Some Palestinian researchers took an interest in studying everything related to Palestinian heritage. One such researcher was Estefan Estefan (1899–1949) who was interested in Palestinian folk tales. Arif Al-Arif (1891–1973) published *Time with the Bedouins* (1934), while Amr Salih Al-Barghouthi (1894–1965) focused on village customs and traditions. Mustafa Al-Dabbagh (1898**–**1989) published *The Village School* (1935) and *The Ancient History of The National World* (1951). Meanwhile, Issa Al-Musso (1923**–**2003) was interested in Palestinian folk proverbs (Al-Barghouthi 1988: 32–40). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. The first issue was published in Jerusalem in October 1920 and was released annually until its 19th issue in 1939. The 20th issue was not published until 1946, after nearly a seven-year hiatus. In June 1948, the 21st and final issue was released. The journal boasted a diverse range of studies on languages, literature, history, folklore, and the antiquities of the ancient Near East. Four Palestinian researchers contributed to this journal, (most of whom specialized in folklore): Estefan Estefan, Elias Haddad, Omar Salih Al-Barghouthi, and Tawfiq Kan’aan (Aqlam 1992: 214**–**215). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Kan’aana 2000: 47–53; Al-Mutawwir 2007: 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Kan’aana 2000: 175**–**182. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Mahawwi 2000: 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Al-Munasira 2009: 8–9; Kan’aana 2011: 393–399. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Al-Munasira 2009: 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. The aims of the committee include compiling everything that was written, photographed, recorded, or said about Palestinian heritage cross linguistics and archiving it in the Center for Social Research of the Family Welfare Society. The aims of the society are to publish studies about Palestinian folklore and to translate everything written about Palestinian heritage (in any language) into Arabic. It also strives to found a museum of Palestinian heritage (Aqlam 1993: 211–213). [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. A visit to this association on 12/3/2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Rabee’ 1974: 28–58. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Kan’aana 2000: 50–51. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Among the most notable works of that period are: Abd Al-Latif Al-Barghouthi’s (1928–2002) study “Folk Songs in Jordan and Palestine” (1963), Omar Al-Sareesi’s (1938–2013) “Palestinian Folk Tales” (1972), Fayyiz Ali Al-Ghoul’s compilation of stories, namely *The World is Stories*, *Legends from my Country*, and *Tales of the Forefathers* (1964–1968), Nimer Serhan’s collection of books on heritage published between 1964 and 1974, namely *Reviving Folklore*, *Canaanite Architecture in Palestine*, *The Encyclopedia of Palestinian Folklore*, *Our Folk Songs in the West Bank*, and *Palestinian Folktales*. Additionally, Yusra Arneeta published Palestinian Folklore in 1968, while Nabil Alqam published The Introduction to the Study of Folklore (1976). Ali Al-Khaleeli (1943–2013) published *The Introduction to the Study of Fables and Work Songs* (1979). [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. There were individual initiatives to erect other foundations dedicated to heritage. ‘Abd Al-Hakim Samara published the journal *The Path* between 1959–1988. He also founded *The Sun Post* in 1993 and, in 2004, he founded The Invisibility Foundation to compile and verify Arabic publications (Mahawwi 2000:25–26). [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Ziyyad 1974: 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Ziyyad 1974: 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Khoury 2004: 26–33. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Kan’aana 2011: 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Khoury 2013: 98. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Kan’aana 1992: 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Kan’aana 2011: 155. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. In the introduction to *Speak Bird*, Anthropologist Alan Dundes said that the book is important for an array of reasons, some of which are political. He added that these stories belong to the Palestinian people and that regardless of one’s view towards the erection of an Israeli state in 1948, one cannot deny that it left the Palestinian people fragmented and displaced. He added that it is similar to what colonial states did when they claimed ownership of already-inhabited land (Mahawwi & Kan’aana 2001: 1–6). [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Kan’aana 2013: 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. See Khoury 2004; 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Hassoona 2006: 119; see also Khoury 2004: 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Hasoona 2006: 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Hassoona 2003: 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Hassoona 2006: 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Al-Ashhab 2001: 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Dundes 1965: 123–233. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Shenhar 1982: 8 [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Al-Ashhab 1994: 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Al-Ashhab 1994: 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Peffer 1997: 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Ibrahim n.d.: 154. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Finnegan 1981: 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Al-Mubayyid 1986: 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Khoury 2004: 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Hassoona 2002: 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Hasoona 2002: 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Wiess 200: 166–186. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Khoury 2004: 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Abu Hanna 1994: 121–123. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Abbas 1989: 16–17. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Shaqir 2012: 54–55. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Lubani 1999: 565. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Lubani 1999: 677. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Lubani 1999: 676–677. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Lubani 1999: 741. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. The term *volkslied* was coined by the German scholar Herder in 1773 and its translation spread to different European languages. Arabs adopted this term and translated it to “folk song” (Khoury 2013: 42). [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Al-Anteel 1978: 245. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Alloush 2001: 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Khoury 2013: 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Al-Khaleeli 1979: 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Al-Khaleeli 1979: 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Hasoona 2006: 25–26. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Al-Khaleeli 1979: 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. For elaboration on Palestinian folk songs see: Khoury 2013: 97–173. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Hassoona 2006: 376. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Serhan 1989: 52–83; Compare: Alloush 2001: 11–20; Compare: Khoury 2004; 70–72. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)